



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 2, 2005

## **OPERATION KEYSTONE SWEEP JOINS V CORPS, PHILLY NATIONAL GUARD TROOPS IN PRE-ELECTION HUNT**

**By Spc. Ismail Turay Jr.**  
196th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

**FORWARD OPERATING BASE SUMMERALL, BAYJI, Iraq --** In the predawn hours of a chilly January morning, three units from V Corps' 1st Infantry Division and a Pennsylvania National Guard battalion prepared to do a sweep of As Siniyah.

The small town, located just outside Bayji, is home to anti-Iraqi forces who are either actively involved in the insurgency or fund it, officials said. The operation was intended conduct raids, capture or kill insurgents and eliminate improvised explosive devices and other illegal weapons in hopes of crippling the insurgency prior to the January 30 election.

As residents slept, Soldiers from Alpha and Bravo companies of Philadelphia's 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 111th Infantry Regiment, the 1st Infantry Division's Cobra Battery, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 7th Field Artillery and Headquarters and Headquarters Troop surreptitiously moved into the town to begin Operation Keystone Sweep just after 5 a.m.

The 1-111th Infantry headed the mission.

Alpha Company's orders were to raid a gas station, several homes and a warehouse in eastern As Siniyah. The company was also responsible for searching vehicles in the area, said the company's commander, Capt. Anthony Callum.

Bravo Company was in charge of the western sector of the town, while Cobra Battery set up roadblocks to prevent traffic from entering or leaving the town. HHT recovered vehicles and provided logistical support, Callum said.

As they prepared for the mission, Alpha Company Soldiers said they were excited about their first major combat operation.

"I'm a little anxious," said Spc. Stephen Madison of Philadelphia. "There is always going to be that worry of casualty and things like that, but every Soldier can do his job to the best of his ability."

Just before sunrise, all the troops and equipment were in position in the town, and the raids began simultaneously. Meanwhile, a group of psychological operations Soldiers used loudspeakers to broadcast a message in Arabic telling residents to remain in their homes and motorists to return to their houses.

In a housing complex, Alpha Company's third platoon kicked in doors of apartments where rebels reportedly lived. As the troops questioned one resident, his wife was in another room comforting their five visibly frightened children. A translator assured them that the Soldiers only wanted information about rebels in the area and the family would not be harmed.

At another house, Alpha Company Soldiers and troops from the 411th Civil Affairs Battalion questioned the family of a known insurgent. The man's children claimed they had not seen him in several weeks, but they were clearly lying, the troops said.

Still, as the Soldiers moved through the town, they treated people with dignity and respect. Some played with children and gave them candy and toys. Others took pictures with them. The 411th troops carried hundreds of vouchers with them to pay on the spot for property that might be destroyed during the raids.

Alpha Company Soldiers did not encounter any insurgents or find any weapons caches during the 12-hour mission. There was a drive-by shooting in Bravo Company's sector, but no one was injured.

Callum said that overall the operation was successful, and the people of As Siniyah will benefit.

"They were happy to see us out in force, because that will prevent the anti-Iraqi forces from entering the town," he said. "If (anti-Iraqi forces) are using As Siniyah, we didn't see them, but we sent a message that we are serious about security."

